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Religion and the War Crisis

R. LESTER MONDALE

Engulfed in an ever-intensifying war crisis, we ministers find ourselves increasingly in the focus of a solicitous public interest. Are we or are we not going to bless the bullets and torpedoes? Such is the question that every congregation arouses in our minds —to say nothing of every newspaper and every public meeting. Shall we line up our churches with the tanks and the bombing squadrons; shall we use our powers of persuasion and of emotional stimulation to intensify the fervor for killing, or shall we not?

A resolute minority of pacifist ministers holds out on the basis of one or another absolute authority: the pacifistic sayings of Jesus; a universalism deducible from the premises of absolute idealism, and the like. Another minority not only clamors for Nazi scalps but also sanctifies the killing with the unction of "moral principle" or of "Christian survival."

Lamentably the decision as to whether or not ministers shall bless the bullets and torpedoes is apparently being made upon a mere resolution of the pacifist-militarist "either-or" position. Thus the clergy are being swept off their feet and into betraying the essence of religion without being fully conscious of the largely subconscious *why* of their present reluctance to get their churches spattered with the gore of the massacre. There are few ministers, and few laymen (north of the Mason and Dixon line), who do not feel that mysterious and hauntingly conscience-bound reluctance just referred to. But what is it? Where are its roots?

Even so much as a cursory glance at the historic interactions of organized religion with crises of state reveals that the relationship has depended upon something far more profound than the revealed or philosophical absolutism of the pacifist or the moral-principle Christian-survival absolutism of the Phoenix-like war party in the church. Historic evidence leads away from revelation and philosophy and moralism to sociology, and to the eternally disturbing fact that organized religion is sociologically *sui generis*. Unlike other social organizations it has been something that no one, no cause, could commandeer at will or order about. Unique among social

groups it has pretended to the unique function of being guardian of what, for want of better terms, might be called the divine fire in the heart of man; it has not only claimed the right to speak for the voice in the burning, but invariably confessed to certain compulsion to speak for it. Today it is this stiff-necked intractability which, in all likelihood, lies at the basis of the unexplicated reluctance of the average Christian to "line up" his church with the tanks and have his minister pour Lewisite into his Sunday morning messages.

When one government or another has assayed to commandeer organized religion, to make it subservient to the uses of internal exploitation or diplomacy or war—after the fashion of the attempts made by the Israelitish kings, or the Roman Emperors; or the Hohenstaufens or the Bourbons or the Stuarts—this peculiarly stubborn and intractable organization has inevitably rebelled. Its priests and prophets have had the Nathan-like effrontery to appear in public places, daring the pitiless instruments that society has always employed to transform men into martyrs, and preach to the theme that there is a *higher authority* than that of any king or state . . . the authority of the revealed word, the authority of conscience, the authority of reason, of the common law. In a war crisis the authority of the state, of the head of the state, of the generals, of the police tends necessarily to become all in all. Authority, moreover, is by nature of its own essence, committed to intrenching itself and to resisting decentralization when the crisis is past. When supreme authority tends to become particularized in the hands of a man or a class, the guardians of the spark of the divine in the human soul become restive. And hints are dropped to the effect that there is a higher authority; and if the hints prove ineffective then follows plain speaking, and then, if necessary, the insistence of the martyr.

To many this stiff-necked detachment of organized religion is not only gruellingly irritating but seemingly tainted with the yellow hues of outright disloyalty. This, however, can be the reaction only of those who judge the case against religion merely in terms of the "either-or" logic heretofore described. In a somewhat larger perspective the hues of disloyalty shade off into something distinctly more mindful of the blood of the martyrs. It is the stubborn intractability of the Confessional Christians and of many Catholics

in Germany which looms large . . . and with it the fact that these are the only organized groups within the German Volk which have persistently defied a totalitarian mobilization that would include even things divine within its muster. To Christians the *Fuehrer* is not the final expression of the *Urwille*. Aside from the Christian social groups there is no overt organized opposition to the authoritarian absolutism of the Third Reich. Thus, irritatingly stiff-necked though organized Christianity may be, it is by the same token an igneous rock basis of resistance to the new absolutisms.

Like all world revolutions the latest derives its power not only out of itself but out of its saturnine ability to attack the opposition as if it were an encroaching neurosis—the more strenuously the opposition struggles against the neurosis the more painful it becomes. Opposition to the neurosis gives the neurosis its unyielding clutch. The only ultimate opposition to the neurosis that does not accentuate the disease is religious opposition . . . the reliance upon an authority that transcends any and all temporary man-made authority, whether it be for attack or for defense. Thus the inner strength of whatever opposition there may be to the influences of Berchtesgaden must come ultimately from that social group which stands unique among social groups in relying on an ever-unfolding authority that transcends any temporary, but would-be finalistic, concentration of power. Should organized religion make itself *merely a military adjunct to national defense*, religion with the rest of society would then succumb to the nervous breakdown of the world. Let the rock of ages become volcanic and begin to quake or crack, and there will be no footing for man, even Americans, except in a neurotic solipsistic authoritarianism that has no saving external reference. And neurosis in this connection is not entirely a figure of speech; witness the psycho-neurotic temperaments of the Nazi-Fascist leadership.

Organized Christianity, once again, has exhibited the same intractability in response to dictatorial insistence that all organizations bow to the decrees of the state as the supreme law. In the face of such insistence there have invariably arisen priests and prophets whose presumption has been a constraint to preach "*higher laws*." The state decreed, "Thou shalt kill." To this, organized religion has generally responded with common-sense doctrines according to which killing of man by man might have

its justification when demanded by justice. But organized religion has never accepted the idea that this killing shall go on forever. Someday, has been the assumption, it must come to an end, and the sooner the better. Hence, killing in a state of war, however highly organized and highly romanticized, always finds the securing of the wholesale approval of churchmen a not altogether easy matter. In the heat of war, men tend to express themselves as did Penelope's nurse at the close of the *Odyssey*. "Ah," said she gleefully, telling of the killing of the suitors, "it would have warmed your heart to see Odysseus, like a lion, dabbled with blood and gore." To the glee and the glorification of killing, organized Christianity responds as did Penelope, with the eternal answer of the divinity in man: "Dear nurse, be not too boastful yet, nor filled with glee." In her heart was written that ancient law of laws which sobers religious men and makes them reluctant to kill even when justice demands it,—"Thou shalt not kill." In remaining detached from the heat of the killing, organized religion keeps before the minds of Americans a further external reference, that which they are ostensibly preparing to defend—a world order in which human life is given the greatest possible security; a world order in which, moreover, respect is paid to other higher laws—to a higher truth than propaganda truth, to a higher morality than the morality of an élite.

Yet again, organized Christianity responds today, as it has in the past, to authoritarianism which has set itself up as the object of supreme loyalty. All outside of the volk-state are necessarily enemies, and, by virtue of an Hebraic insistence upon blood purity, they remain enemies, even when incorporated within the volk-state. As in Germany today organized Christianity is the bed-rock of opposition to theories that make all men enemies, theories the consequences of which we are now witnessing in fact in occupied countries. But wherever a state of war holds sway, members of the opposition are branded not only as Red Coats, Red Skins, Reds, but are reduced to sub-human categories—beasts, dogs, rats—which, in turn, not only vitiate all efforts towards brotherhood but degrade human nature as such. The hatred of the enemy leads to a defamation that does not stop with human frailties but quickly becomes a defamation of human nature itself. Thus are all parties dragged down to wallow in the depths of the Stygian lake. Organized re-

ligion, however, in remaining detached, mindful of its guardianship of the spark of the divine within the soul, mindful of its oracular and prophetic functions, counters the exclusive loyalty to Volk and nation with the gospel of a *higher loyalty*, loyalty to that larger state in which all men are seen not as nordics, or mongoloids, or semitics, or negroids, but as men, as neighbors, as incipiently and inherently brothers. Here again is the external reference, the only adequate footing for defense against the racial exclusiveness of the Central Powers, which must be held before the anti-fascist forces if they are not to succumb to the fascist neurosis.

The business of religion in these times is no more or less than it always has been and must necessarily always be, that of unflinchingly looking friend as well as foe, totalitarian power as well as democratic power, straight in the eye, giving expression to the ever-unfolding voice of the divine within the human soul, insisting ever and anon that there is a higher authority than the authority of those who sit at the controls of government, that there is a higher law than the statute laws and decrees of the state, that there is a higher loyalty than loyalty to the nation alone. The business of religion is paradoxical. If religion, on the one hand, refuses to preach words that are bullets and poison gas, it does, on the other hand, provide those who oppose totalitarian absolutism, with the only footing from which there can be any effective opposition to the absolutism of Volk-Fuehrers.

Whether or not America succumbs to the nervous breakdown of the world depends, in far larger measure than we may be aware, upon the religious perspectives of the Christian ministry.

Crisis Thinking

PHILIP WHEELWRIGHT

“Eagles swoop down straight.”—Nietzsche.

In time of crisis the only alternative to thought is hysteria. At other periods of human history or individual life, when the pulse of occurrence is slower, the choice may be less severe. Habit and custom serve well enough in ordinary situations, and thought may even be an awkward intruder, introducing needless complexities, covering instinctive responses with the blush of self-consciousness. But an unthinking acquiescence that works smoothly at normal times leaves us defenseless in crisis against the incitations of mob-mindedness. Where the stream of history flows at a broad even tempo it is safe to drift, but where the rapids begin there is danger of being dashed against the rocks.

What is crisis, and how adequate are the resources of human thought to cope with it? These two questions set a major task of reflective inquiry for our time. Probably our success in answering them, and in reorienting our thought and action in the light of our answer, will affect the course of American and of world civilization for some while to come.

Crisis is a word which it is all too easy to use hysterically and loosely. Although nearly everyone agrees that the world is going through a period of crisis, there is little agreement as to just what this means. Threat of war, threat of dictatorship, governmental restrictions upon business, the laxity of moral standards, the ever increasing enslavement of man by machine—these are a few of the ideas which contemporary references to crisis are likely to suggest. We shift the brunt of meaning now to this aspect, now to that, depending upon our particular interests and insecurities. Yet behind such diversity of aspects the irreducible fact of crisis remains: in some sense or other a threat to cherished values, to familiar patterns of living and of making choices, to what we may call in this precise sense our entire spiritual heritage. How shall we meet this threat, and first of all how shall we diagnose it?

A good physician knows better than to confuse the disease with the symptom, to palliate with ointments when only surgery can cure. The body's symptoms appear as so many separate and accidental phenomena until a dispassionate and resolute analysis has

traced the underlying pathological pattern. Diseases of society are less easy to diagnose. Objectivity, though constantly talked about, is seldom attained. The difficulty is not, as sometimes in the physician's case, that the available data are insufficient. Detailed information about how men and societies behave is enormous, far too copious for anyone to really assimilate and interpret. Our trouble is not that we have too little knowledge, but that we have too much knowledge of a wrong kind. Statistics buttress our prejudices, capsuled erudition chokes our doubts. We are given elaborate instructions on how to fly, while walking with firm pace becomes a lost art.

The first phase of our problem is to discover a method by which the inner nature of the crisis situation—or as I shall hereafter call it, the crucial situation¹—can be investigated. This is particularly difficult because the crisis of which I am speaking is not limited to outward aspects of civilization—economic, political and military—but is a *total* crisis, a challenge at once to civilization and to the values by which it is judged. A total crisis throws the judge and his standards inescapably among the events submitted to judgment. We are in the position of a physicist who finds the nature of his measuring instruments affected by the high velocities he is trying to measure, or of Alice seeing her wickets wandering about on the croquet ground. Plato, whose ideal forms were fixed and eternal, will teach us less than Heraclitus, who sought clues amid the ceaseless flux. We must learn, as Paul Valéry has remarked, to travel light; and much of what passed a generation ago for everlasting truth finds small relevance to the crucial questions of our time. This is not to suggest that we abandon theory for practice, the word for the deed. Such a divorce would only increase the reigning confusion. The problem is rather one of accent, of idiom, of re-examining our way of asking questions, of making sure that such questions are pertinent to our epochal situation.

Much has been written during the last decade about the crisis of capitalism, and while this economic crisis plays only a limited role in the total crisis which we are considering, the broad outlines of its pattern are typical of the outer, empirical aspect of crisis generally. To isolate a single factor in the economic predicament:

¹The adjective "crucial" will be employed in the exact sense of "having the character of crisis." The word "critical," despite its etymological justification, is too ambiguous for this role.

our capitalist economy is geared to mass production at an ever accelerated rate; accelerated mass production is economically profitable only as mass consumption is accelerated at approximately the same rate; but because of the concentration of wealth in relatively few hands, with the consequent inability of great numbers to buy consumers' goods which they would gladly buy if they could, the economic capacity of society to consume does not keep pace with rapidly increasing production. While the maladjustment can be corrected temporarily by the opening of new foreign markets, the encouragement of such inflationary practices as long-term installment buying, and increased government spending, yet as the practical possibilities of such correction are finite, there comes a time when production so far exceeds consumption that the precarious equilibrium of price-structure and income-structure collapses. Economics thus furnishes a particularly clear example of crisis in its outward aspect: an increasing tension between two divergent pulls; the equilibrium preserved temporarily by external checks; the tension increasing finally to a degree where the checks are no longer operative, causing an explosion. The same general pattern can be traced analogously in widely different kinds of social manifestation—e.g., in the history of European diplomacy from Versailles to the outbreak of the second world war.

The philosophy of dialectical materialism treats economic cycles like the one here described as typical of the units of occurrence out of which history in general is fashioned. A pure dialectical materialism would regard the cycles of history with their several phases—constructive, crucial, and catastrophic—in a purely deterministic manner: a crisis in this sense is just something that happens to us. Men are at once the instruments and the victims of huge, blind, impersonal forces over which they cannot exercise an iota of effective control. Dialectical materialism is thus the logical consequence of an exclusive concern with the empirical, outer, impersonal side of historical occurrence; and like all strictly empirical methods it possesses the disadvantage of leaving the essential questions—the austere mystery of being and each man's individual obligations in the face of that mystery—untouched. Actually, dialectical materialism is rarely found in pure form. Neither Marx nor Lenin, although they leaned in that direction, espoused a fully consistent dialectical materialism; for they used their quasi-materialistic philosophy as an inspirational and propa-

gandistic means of arousing the proletariat to an awareness of its own crucial situation and thereby, as they hoped, to concerted and socially oriented action. Yet always in marxist theory the crucial experience, i.e. the crisis experience of the individual, is of vanishing importance ; mass behavior is the great thing.

Now we cannot treat history deterministically as a pure science, for the very reason that we are a part of the subject-matter of that science and cannot escape being so. Where the student is a part of what is studied the objectivity of the study can never be complete. The perfectly objective historian perceives only the corpse of history. For him history is composed of events, characterized by spatio-temporal location and causal interconnection. A description in such terms, however accurate in detail, is no more adequate to history than to biography. History, which is the biography of the human race, is composed, like the biography of individuals, not of events merely, but of decisions. As an individual biography which represented its subject as never doing anything but reacting to stimuli would be humanly uninteresting—would be scarcely a biography indeed, but rather a necrography,—so a history which omitted the primary fact of the decisions made by men at decisive moments would be as barren of significance as a telephone directory. Whatever interest it might seem to afford, other than utilitarian or kaleidoscopic, would be contributed by the reader who, spurning the hoax, could read motive and meaning into the characters so unrevealingly described. For the essential units of history are not events but decisive moments, which is to say crucial moments seen from the inside as moments of decisive thought and choice. It is this inner meaning of crisis, involving judgment—as connoted by the Greek work *krisis*, from *krito*, "I judge"—which furnishes the most inescapable part of our inquiry.

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Since thought is a multi-valued term, it is necessary to define more closely the kind of thought that is demanded by the crisis situation. In order to indicate more sharply the nature of crisis thinking, we may first distinguish two ordinary ways in which the mind operates, which I shall designate *utility thinking* and *luxury thinking*. This distinction, although it cuts across certain more technical distinctions with regard to mental processes, is familiar enough. We can employ thought as an instrument for adapting

available means to the attainment of desired ends, and we can indulge in thought for the sheer pleasure of thinking. While the two modes are not in every actual situation separable, their difference of intent is plain. Utility thinking investigates means to a wished for end, where the worth of the end is assumed and not examined in this particular act of thinking itself. A further act of utility thinking may inquire into the value of the end thus postulated, but only by reference to an ulterior end whose worth is in turn accepted without question. The utilitarian and pragmatic movements in modern philosophy have sought to elevate utility thinking to the type and standard of thought generally; the one ultimate justification for thought being found in its promotion of clearly defined forms of social happiness.

Luxury thinking, on the other hand, operates upon ends themselves: not like utility thinking, by regarding them as means to ulterior ends, and not like crisis thinking, driven by crucial inner need. When it operates aesthetically—that is, upon the sensuous and emotional surfaces of experience—it tends toward an attitude of art for art's sake, unoriented aestheticism. When it operates intellectually—that is, upon objects, ideas and relations which can be more or less exactly designated by some kind of structural language—it takes the form of philosophical scepticism, of inquiring into the validity of every idea that is presented to it; and since it need admit no standards of validity save those devised by the intellect itself as expressed in the canons of logical discourse, for every other standard is open to its challenge, the natural effect of luxury thinking in its pure state is to encourage and seemingly to justify an attitude of universal doubt. Thought for thought's sake, which is in essence as perversely inhuman a doctrine as art for art's sake or life for life's sake and only a notch better than business for business' sake, involves a more subtle danger than any of these, for it vaunts its method as the only means to truth at the same time that it corrodes man's faith that truth can ever be found. The natural end of pure luxury thinking is nihilism of values. If most philosophers escape this consequence, it is thanks to a happy co-presence of other modes of thinking in their souls.

By crucial thinking—or, what is the same thing, by crisis as a mode of thinking—I mean the decision-character of human experience. Man finds his fulfillment as a maker of decisions; and to define him as a rational animal has primarily this sense—he is an

animal who can think crucially, who can make decisive choices to which he remains faithful and which are consequential for the kind of person he is to be. Professor Warner Fite used to declare, "Man is the only animal who knows that he is an animal." This, we may presume, is true. But the mere luxury-knowledge of one's super-bestial status is biological snobbery. What matters is not that we can know with the indolence of theory what kind of animal we are, but that we can know this crucially,—which is to say, that we can learn through crucial experiences the possibilities of our own remaking. Man, then, is the only animal capable of decisively remaking himself. It is through the exercise of this capability that he exists as man. As Kierkegaard has said, he finds his existence in the Either-Or of experience. Expressing by the Greek *kairos* what I have been calling crucial moment, Professor Paul Tillich writes: "Every actual grasping of essential reality is concrete, and takes its stand in the crucial moment (*kairos*), in the decisive character of time as it is realized. Whatever its universality it contains within itself the concrete risk of decision." And Professor Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy finds in this decisive character of experience the essence of philosophy: "To philosophize is to be able to say yes and no; the mass-man can only say yes, he is the yes-man, swayed by trends . . . The philosopher is not the man who is good at philosophy; he is the man who comes to philosophical problems clumsily but from a necessity because they are important to his salvation." Crucial thinking then, which is to say truly philosophical thinking, is the thinking that a man does from innermost necessity, because to leave the thought unthought, the word unspoken, would be a violation of his nature, an abdication of his status as the animal who can remake himself.

In relation to time, the crucial thinker is one who takes a hand in creating the future, who does not simply wait for the future to happen to him. But as the utility thinker also moulds the future in certain ways—and the difference between moulding and creating is by no means clear—it is necessary to discover the crucial thinker's distinctive character in his relation rather to the present. The crucial thinker is related to the present in a special way. It is not merely that he happens to have actual existence in the present, which is true of everyone who exists, and not at all that he is caught up and victimized by the present, but that whenever he is thinking crucially he is conscious of the "*now*" as a permanent

possibility of decision. The *now* of decision is not the knifeblade *now* of analysis, nor is it the kaleidoscopic *now* of introspection. It is the *now* which offers itself at each crucial moment as the never-to-be-repeated opportunity for consequential action. It is the *now* which cries not only "thou art," the axiom on which Descartes built the structure of philosophical rationalism, but "thou shalt," which is the basis of responsible action.

There is a factor of cruciality in all significant thought, whatever luxury or utility character it may possess as well; and crisis thinking, in turn, is seldom found without some admixture of these other elements. The artist luxuriates, and must indeed enjoy some sense of luxury to achieve artistic perspective, but if his art is authentic there is an inescapable "thou shalt" which drives him on. Perhaps the greatness of art has something to do with the proper balance of luxury and crisis elements in the artist's soul. The moralist—and we are all moralists in our responsibly reflective moments—expresses his sense of crucial urgency in disciplines which contain some measure of utility thinking however refined or disguised. Even the loftiest utterances of religious prophecy, through which the sense of crisis blows with shattering force, become intelligible to men only as they issue a call to action; and every call to action adumbrates, however dimly, a goal to be striven toward—hence the sacrifice of present advantage to future good. This utilitarian appeal is not of the essence of prophecy, but it appears to be the only language through which the prophet can speak forth his message of crucial urgency to men. Conversely, the most utilitarian and materialistic thinker need not be without crucial motivation: we cannot guess how sharply a Bentham or a Karl Marx may have been scorched by his own thought-generating fires.

The handicap, at least academic and political, which crucial thinking suffers as compared with its rival modes, is caused by its reluctance to lend itself to ready systematization. Crucial thinking may form itself, indeed, into what Pascal called "a logic of the heart," but that is not a logic on which objective examinations can be set, nor by which public experiments can be conducted. All crucial thinking contains an element of the absurd, for it is a conscious crystallization of a tension between incompatibles. Hegel is one philosopher who faced systematically this problem of the paradoxical in thinking, but his systematic procedure defeated his aim, for

he was obliged to assume that which crucial thinking leaves specifically unassumed—namely, that the conflicting terms in every tension of incompatibles can be logically, and are historically, at length resolved in a higher synthesis. Hegel is therein repeating, but in a more subtle, syncopated form, the fallacy that vitiates most professional philosophy and threatens it with perpetual obsolescence: the *fallacy of intemperate synthesis*. To the crucial thinker every attempt at wholesale synthesis is intemperate, for there are modes of knowledge, concretions of experience, which do not fit without Procrustean adjustments into any logical bed. Coleridge, who contrived to retain an amateur standing in philosophy, knew that deep thinking always involves deep feeling, and that the "Euclidean understanding" cannot comprehend the sum of reality. The Euclidean understanding, which is composed in one proportion or another of utility and luxury elements, plays its shots too hard and thereby lacks style. Indeed, I rather suspect that a thinker's style has something to do with the unresolved crucial conflicts which motivate his thought.

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Two major aspects of crisis have emerged from the inquiry so far: crisis as the period of tension preceding a catastrophic re-orientation of historical forces, and crisis as the moment of human experience which imposes peremptorily the "either-or" of human judgment (*krisis*) and choice. Jointly these aspects constitute the entire secular meaning of crisis. Has crisis any meaning beyond the secular?

There is a third sense of crisis, a religious and apocalyptic sense, which runs like a small but deep stream through the history of Christian theology. Here the reference of the Graeco-Christian word *krisis* is not primarily to man's judgment of his situation but to God's judgment upon the world. Emil Brunner remarks truly that "the note of crisis with its repeated emphasis on *now* and *today* . . . sounds like a bugle-note all through the prophets, and through the New Testament, and through the works of the Reformers." The bugle-note is a summons to a way of life wholly other than the natural way of life; and that other leader of the "theology of crisis" movement, Karl Barth, finds etymological justification for this connotation also, inasmuch as a secondary original meaning of *krisis* was "separation." Crisis seen from this standpoint is at

once God's stern judgment against the rising tide of human culpability, as foretold for example in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and a reaffirmation of the essential separation between the normal, natural way of existence and the divine accountability to which man is called. Such crisis is described by Barth's memorable phrase, "the vertical descent of God into time."

It goes without saying that many thoughtful persons of today, while admitting readily the first two meanings of crisis, to which their own experience has testified, will dismiss the religious interpretation as outmoded superstition. Can that interpretation be rationally justified? I think it can, by a phenomenological analysis of crisis as a mode of experience. The demonstration may be stated briefly as follows: All experience is intentive, digital, semantic, pointing to the existence of something beyond itself. Experience is not simply a congeries of ghostly events transpiring in the head; it is a relation between man and environment, represented according to the environment's impingements upon man together with man's intentions, conscious or unconscious, toward his environment. But what is environment? To call it physical and restrict it to recognizably physical characteristics begs the question: the character of the environment can be known only through man's experience of it, and the task of phenomenology is to discover as exactly as possible the qualities of this responsive experience which lives by stamping characteristics upon itself and its world. Because experience is not all of a piece, so too the world experienced is not all of a piece, notwithstanding much philosophical ingenuity spent in trying to make it appear so. The mind has many doors and windows, although for everyday transactions it may be judicious to open only those designed for ready commerce. On non-crucial modes of experience the material everyday world impinges persistently; such experience is intentive with respect to that world,—which means that the experiencer at once has a disposition, perhaps latent, to engage in action toward it, and also, as the semantic concomitant of such action, knows the material world as something transcending himself and his action, and as having importance to him and to it. Crucial experience acts analogously. What impinges on it essentially is not the physical or even in any usual sense the social environment but the categorical "thou shalt," the command to responsible decision. Crucial experience responds toward the "thou shalt" not only actually but

semantically: in acting it perceives the command as something of vast, awful, and transcendent importance, issuing from an unknown beyond. As an experience of green leafiness points naturally to trees and bushes whose existence transcends one's immediate experience of them, so the inner crisis experience proclaims a similarly transcendent reference—a reality greater than man which crucially commands man to respond crucially. The divine character of the command is proved by the reverence which it strikes in the responder; for what is divinity if not the ideal counterpart of the experience of reverence—the outer referent of the human sense of unconditioned accountability? Whether we say that the command *is* God—i.e., that the word “God” is simply a convenient noun by which to speak of the transcendently hortatory in experience—or that the command *issues from* God, will depend on whether we discover other transcendent qualities in experience which amplify God's meaning. The question may be phrased: Is God definable as *the eternal possibility of crucial experience*, or is he at once this—which I take to be the minimal definition—and something more? The question, fundamental for theology, points beyond the scope of the present paper, which is concerned solely to emphasize the essentiality of crisis to the nature of God, as of the world and of man.

For indeed this crucial aspect of religion, though indispensable from prophetic, primitive, and Augustinian Christianity, is forgotten or repudiated by Christian modernism. The God of love and light has all but ousted the stern and inscrutable God of Israel. Alas, his worshipers fall easy prey to romantic self-delusion. Granted that love and light are included among the major attributes of Godhead, can we evade the paradox that sternness and inscrutability find a place there too? For these are the objective correlates of two qualities inseparable from man's religious life—the qualities of accountability and awe. We modern men want a God (so far as we want one at all) with whom we can stand on terms of mutual familiarity—reflecting perhaps our democratic spirit, which tends to horizontalize all spiritual relations. We want him amiable rather than stern, for we are free citizens who cannot countenance exorbitant demands. And, with our modern zeal for blueprinting the universe, we want him understandable. Inscrutability has become suspect, paradox and mystery strike us as something to be either solved and explained or else banished from

the orbit of our awareness. Such are the conditions, the prejudices, with which the religious hypothesis for most of us is hedged. And yet do we not court delusion by playing thus fast and loose with evidence? Only two alternatives are decently permissible: either confine ourselves to the secular dimension and confess ourselves honest atheists, or else follow the evidences of religion wherever they may lead.

Our time today is a time of crisis, and this crucial fact has revolutionized our philosophies. At the very least it has challenged the simple-minded notion of mankind enjoying, by *a priori* dispensation or biological prerogative, a moral and material progress onward and upward forever. The progressive idea of history has been giving way, in widening circles of opinion, to the catastrophic. There is a gain in intellectual forthrightness here: it is dangerous to enjoy hallucinations of ascending staircases on the brink of a pit. Nevertheless a purely catastrophic interpretation of history, whether in Marx's terms or Spengler's, is of shallow meaning for men. The dreary round of event following event, generation following generation, historical cycle upon historical cycle, invites only passivity and, in the morally sensitive, despair. Neither Marx nor Spengler came to a stop in this negative attitude; each has issued a characteristic call to action. To heed the call to significant action—for heeding is quite different from the hysteria of reacting unthinkingly—is the mark of crucial response. But the full crucial response, as I have argued, goes farther: it is semantic as well. The crucial responder attaches objective significance to the source and validity of the call to action. He therein perceives crisis not as a fortuitous prelude to catastrophe, requiring heroic endeavors for no better reason than the preservation of self or class or race, but as God's shattering judgment upon the errant, self-defeating character of any merely human, unguided attempt to make history. He begins to perceive dimly the apocalyptic meaning of the monstrous events that daily confound us, their transcending and sacramental reference. And he comes to understand that we are now entering the apocalyptic age prophesied by Daniel, by Jesus, and by John: not that a particular day of the calendar will mark the end of the world, but that it is a time of judgment, when we can no longer enjoy the prerogatives of spectators, but must submit to the divine indictment and make the one crucial choice left open to us, the crucial choice between purgatory and hell.

The Religious Socialist in the World Crisis¹

GERHARD E. O. MEYER

*"Oh blossom, frozen Christian,
Thy May is very near;
Thou will'st remain forever dead,
Unless thou blossom'st now and here."*

These words of the German mystic Angelus Silesius apply with particular force in the present winter of the history of mankind. But how can we begin—or continue to begin—to live in the Christian faith "here and now," in the midst of suffering and killing, in the midst of frustrated hopes and rising hatred and despair, in the midst of intellectual and moral weakness and confusion—all of which we have done our full share to create and to perpetuate? Firm determination and courageous deeds in the solution of our more immediate personal or collective problems merely seem to underline the deeper, more enduring crisis of our time, the vicious circle built out of the products of pride and anxiety in which we find ourselves caught with all our good intentions and activities. Is there any concrete Christian meaning in our history; has Christianity any meaning for our time? One may answer that these questions make sense only on the basis of Christian faith, and, consequently, are superfluous both for Christians and for those who do not accept the Jewish-Christian tradition; the former already have the answer, the latter cannot even understand the question. The present essay is based on the assumptions that the distinction between professed Christians and Non-christians is, just from the point of view of Christian principles, merely a matter of degree, that Christians are no less than

¹This article is the extended version of an address delivered to the convention of the Universalist National Young People's Christian Union in Unity Church, Oak Park, Illinois in July 1941. The paper was written out in September 1941. The outbreak of the war has rendered some parts less relevant. However, apart from a few changes taking account of the new conditions, the article has been left in its original form. The author, a refugee from Germany, wishes to thank the editor of this JOURNAL, Professor James L. Adams, for his generous and friendly help without which the paper would never have been completed. The reader is, however, asked to remember that erroneous opinions and other shortcomings are to be attributed to the author and not to the editor.

others involved in the crisis of our world and that very many people outside the churches, liberals, democrats, socialists, humanists, with all their secularizations, distortions and losses, are yet depositaries of Christian principles and energies. In short, for all these groups the trial both of Christianity and by Christianity is still pending. This deeper community of origin and destiny is brought home to all of them once they are confronted by outright anti-Christian movements. There exists, therefore, at present both the need and the opportunity for genuine cooperative discussion and common practice, each group putting forth the best of its reconsidered heritage without false pretenses of certainty and superiority. If there is any particular hope attached to the participation of Christians in this common process of theoretical and practical exploration, it is, perhaps, because the Christian faith at once permits and necessitates the most radical way of questioning and responding, since it points beyond the life and death of everything, beyond even the Christian religion itself.

The following considerations attempt to restate a particular attitude toward the world and its present crisis. With rather considerable misgivings, this attitude might be labelled as "religious-socialist" or "Protestant-socialist." The term "religious socialism" which was first used in Switzerland and Germany, is of secondary importance and does not deserve to be made the object of any quarrel. What is important is that in different countries various groups have been formed which partly independently and partly in close cooperation with each other, have developed a fairly homogeneous, characteristic body of theological and political doctrines. Many of their theological views have, of course, originated with other groups or are shared by other (non-socialist) theologians. Correspondingly, most of their political views have been developed and are accepted also by socialists who would not accept their religious beliefs. The group with which this paper is concerned is distinguished by its peculiar combination of both "layers." Its main task, if not yet achievement, is the construction and application of a dynamic type of Christian social ethics relevant to our times. This ethics views the growth of human "autonomy" as the fundamental fact of modern history. It refuses to break this autonomy in favor of some old or new "heteronomy" of religious authoritarianism. It rather attempts "dialectically" both to overcome

and to preserve human autonomy, protecting it against its inner self-destructive tendencies, by its integration into a new "theonomy" of Christian faith, a faith that transcends the world and just because of that is able to see the real human situation in nature and history, to "enter" the world and to transform it "from within."

This "religious-socialist" position is here presented not as the only answer to our deepest and at the same time most concrete problems, but merely as a possible one. To the present writer, this particular version of Christian beliefs seems to be the relatively most significant interpretation of life in our time. The choice of this alternative out of many available ones is, of course, not merely a matter of reason, but a matter of "existential" faith, ultimately based not on cognition and knowledge, but on recognition and simple acknowledgement. This does not mean that the fully developed position itself must necessarily be an irrational one. On the contrary, at least as far as any branch of the Jewish-Christian tradition is concerned, faith, though it is not exhausted by reason, yet certainly implies reason; correspondingly, once the ultimate decisions are made, each position has to be subjected to the test of internal consistency. "Religious socialism" appears to fulfil reasonable standards of consistency, at least in the sense that none of its more specific factual and preferential contents are incompatible with the basic premises. On the other hand, it also fulfils (it is hoped) a second condition which is both an implication of the general Christian position and a prerequisite for any participant in genuine discussion: namely, a certain openness and flexibility in spite of, or rather because of, the firmness and severity of the basic principles. This second requirement means a genuine preparedness to redefine and reinterpret fundamental symbols of theory and practice in terms of the deepest needs and the best potentialities of the hour, as they are explored and realized through "existential" communication between fellow-men. Needless to say, these two indispensable (though in themselves not sufficient) criteria of religious validity are not perfectly fulfilled by present-day or any other "religious socialism." It is needless also to state more explicitly that the present writer makes no claim to speak authoritatively in the name of "religious socialists" or of "socialist Protestant Christians." As compared with the work of men like Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Tillich and André

Philip,² the present brief outline written by an outsider³ contains most likely serious errors of omission as well as of commission, not to speak of certain deliberate deviations in matters of emphasis.

Our questions, then, are: what is "religious socialism" (as here understood, neglecting other groups that claim, with perhaps equal or greater justification, the same name for quite different tenets)? What can it contribute to the interpretation and the solution of the present world crisis? In particular, what is its attitude toward the use of violence? The answers to these questions may be expected to shed some light upon those most disquieting deeper problems with which we started.

I. The general attitude of religious socialism to history and politics.

The religious socialists about whom I am reporting believe themselves loyal to the genuine Jewish-Christian tradition, in particular to the prophetic-Protestant tradition. In so far as religion and churches and their "*kerygma*" are a matter of human history, the very principles of Christian faith require again and again a self-critical re-interpretation and recreation of symbols and of practical applications, though always in the light of the basic revelation contained in the Gospels and always in continuity and inner communication with other phases and groups of historical Christianity. In this sense, the group I am speaking about would deviate in some respects from the Reformers and in many respects from the secularized versions of modern liberal Protestantism and their desperate and artificial antidote called orthodoxy or fundamentalism. Religious socialism grew in a dialectical man-

²These three authors may be considered as the leading representatives of what here is called "religious socialism." See Paul Tillich, *The Religious Situation*, New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1932; *idem*, *The Interpretation of History*, New York: Scribner, 1937; *idem*, "Ethics in a Changing World" in *Religion and the Modern World*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, Bicentennial Conference, 1941, pp. 51-62. Reinhold Niebuhr's relevant writings are so numerous that it is impossible to list them here. Suffice it to refer to *Christianity and Power Politics*, New York: Scribner, 1941 and *Human Nature and Destiny*, Volume I, New York: Scribner, 1941. The second volume of the latter work probably will become an important reference for all problems raised in this paper. A short summary of Reinhold Niebuhr's views is to be found in "Religion and Action," a paper contained in *Religion and the Modern World* (l.c., pp. 88-108). See also the quarterly *Christianity and Society* and the bi-weekly *Christianity and Crisis*; Niebuhr is the chief editor of both periodicals. André Philip's writings are in French; cf. especially *Le Christianisme et la Paix*, Paris: Edition "Je Sers," 1933, of which the first chapter has been

ner out of liberal religion; it had then to pass through a deep crisis, perhaps best represented by the change from the first to the second edition of Karl Barth's commentary on the Epistle to the Romans; finally it reached a position in which to a certain degree the older antagonisms between liberalism and orthodoxy, optimism and pessimism and other antagonisms are, at least in principle, overcome in a synthesis which seems to me anything but eclectic.*

a. *Religion and ethics.* It would be as impossible as it is improper to state here the theological bases of present-day "religious socialism" or radical Protestantism in greater detail. However, some references to the central tenets and problems of Christian ethics seem indispensable. There is, above all, the First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." This is really all that is needed to establish negatively and positively what attitude a Christian should take to the world. All that follows is but a series of interpretations of this core of our faith as it was most decisively revealed in the death, life and word of Jesus. The first interpretation is contained in the Great Commandment preaching love to God and man (Mark 12: 29-31, and Matt. 22: 37-40). This again is interpreted by the apostle Paul, the most important passages being, perhaps, those stating the proper Christian attitude in paradoxical terms (1. Cor. 7:29-31, and

translated by James L. Adams and published in *The Protestant Digest*, June 1939, pp. 16-31. Agreement with the main views of these men does not exclude disagreements as to other points. Indeed, the ideas of the three authors are themselves not identical.

The term "religious socialism" was chosen partly in order to include socialists who stand in the Jewish-prophetic tradition, and partly in order to distinguish the movement from the older, frequently very conservative types of "Christian Socialism." The complex problem of the relationships between "religious socialism" and Marxism will not be dealt with in this paper.

*The writer, being an economist, rather prefers secular to theological language. The meaning of the old Christian symbols frequently seems to him ambiguous or worn out. However, since he is speaking mainly to conscious Christians, he feels obliged to speak their language, a language which is even more difficult to grasp than that of a new country is for an immigrant. This personal experience may but reflect a general need for our generation, the need for "translation," for new symbols that will preserve more effective continuity with the faith of our fathers.

*The latter aspect is admirably represented by a book that is perhaps, strictly speaking, not a document of "religious socialism," but fits very well into its general pattern: H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Meaning of Revelation*, New York: Scribner, 1941. See Paul Tillich's review article in *Religion in Life*, Summer 1941.

2. Cor. 6: 4-10). These or similar statements are partly a restatement of the "ethical eschatology" or the "eschatological ethics" of the Sermon on the Mount, partly they are the indispensable context for its right understanding. The "negative" side of this Christian attitude may be restated in this manner: we should never make anything earthly or human into God, neither our life and vitality nor our reason, neither our family nor our country, nor even humanity at large; neither any form of society nor culture nor any church, nay not even the Christian religion itself, inasmuch as religion is something human. We are not God, though we always try to make ourselves or some part and aspect of ourselves absolute and are thereby constitutional sinners. This negative freedom from the world and its idolatries is only another word for faith in God which again implies love of God and hope for God's kingdom. However, faith in God, with its recognition of human finiteness and human sinfulness, if it is not to become mere "negative idolatry," can never lead to despair and absolute asceticism. There is no "faith-ful" freedom *from* the world that is not freedom *for* the world and vice versa, no love of God that does not become concrete love of man and his world, God's creation, and vice versa. Correspondingly, in Jewish-Christian faith, there is no freedom without love and no love without freedom, freedom always understood in both its negative and its positive meaning. All this has often been summed up in the statement that the Christian should be *in* the world, though not *of* the world⁵. The "not-having" of St. Paul's paradoxical prescriptions, referred to above, presupposes and requires some "having," the "transcending" presupposes something to be transcended, which, as such, has to be taken seriously, though not for its own sake, nor for our own sake, but in its and our relation to God.

At this point, it becomes necessary to inquire somewhat more thoroughly into the meaning of the "Kingdom of God," and the "law of love" as preached, for instance, in the Sermon on the Mount⁶. The "law of love" is not a law in the proper sense,

⁵Cf. Martin Luther, *Christian Liberty* (edition of the United Lutheran Publication House), p. 57: "'My Kingdom is not hence, nor of this world,' says Christ, but he does not say: 'My Kingdom is not here, nor in this world'."

⁶In this respect, I have found M. Dibelius, *The Sermon on the Mount*, New York: Scribner, 1940, most helpful, together with the writings of Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr.

but a description of what the attitude and behavior of the children of God in his Kingdom would be. And as far as it is fulfilled, it implies the end of all law, of all distinction between "is" and "ought." Thus, our question has to focus on the meaning of the gospel of the Kingdom of God. Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God was "near," coming, so to speak, from God toward the world and bringing judgment and grace or salvation with it. Jesus—at least in some of his words—and to a somewhat lesser degree also the apostle Paul, apparently believed that the coming of God's Kingdom in which men would be free from themselves and for each other, would occur at a particular, not very distant point in time. Therefore, Jesus' gospel implied a call for whoever was willing to hear, to turn around completely ("metanoia"), to trust in God, to disregard all anxiety and concern about the compulsions and contradictions of this world, and to live as members of the inbreaking kingdom. In other words, this aspect of Jesus' eschatology had some temporal apocalyptic connotation. This, of course, does not mean that his "absolute" ethics of the Sermon on the Mount was a mere "interim ethic" for the short period until the end of this world, as has sometimes been suggested by men who started by being worried about the *applicability* of Jesus' teaching and usually ended by denying even its *relevance* for our times. The command of love and the surrounding commands and beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount were meant to be and are still for us the eternal will of God, command and promise in one. The first Christians tried to live somewhat more literally according to Jesus' absolute principles, treating the needs of their temporal lives rather with indifference, if not with impatience. Gradually, however, it became necessary to envisage a practically infinite duration of "this" world, and adjustments in the ethical system to the relativities and requirements of earthly life were attempted and—for a time at least—also realized, to a large degree by a fusion of Jewish-Christian with Greek and Roman thought and institutions. It is impossible to trace here these re-interpretations of Christian revelation and experience. There is no doubt that they were to a high degree inevitable and that they preserved most important truths, even though they did so, from our present-day point of view, in a more or less distorted manner. Even theologies and churches do not escape the tragedies of all human history, and the reaction to medieval Christianity in old and modern

Protestantism shows again, though in different directions, human distortions of the faith and correspondingly tragic results. However, through all these changes that affected so greatly the understanding of the gospel of the Kingdom of God and of love, there was preserved, and from time to time sharply emphasized, one other aspect of Jesus' "eschatology" which, in my opinion, is much more important than the "apocalyptic" element: eternity is not something beginning in the future at a final point in time, nor is it dissoluble into an infinite number of time particles; rather, eternity is here and now, "vertical" to our concrete time. There may be a point in history when history disappears, so to speak buried in eternity. In periods of deep crisis in human history, this absolute, and not "merely" dialectical, end of the times is particularly emphasized in contrition and in hope. But this is merely a specific accentuation and actualization of those more basic Christian conceptions and attitudes, perhaps a reaction to developments in human history in which the sense of the *tension* between time and eternity was attenuated in favor of an either optimistic or skeptical mere "this-worldliness." In this sense, then, the Kingdom of God is *always* "near," always "*coming*," as a promise and a challenge; the time is always in fullness ("*kairos*")—though it may be true, as Tillich's Christian philosophy of history suggests, that there are particular periods in history when new forms of realization become possible and meaningful which then call forth a new prophetic interpretation of the will of God, a specific *kairos* within the "universal" *kairos* of Jewish-Christian faith.

This fundamental conception of eternity and time, of God and man, which, I think, is also contained in the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, determines the role of the command of love in human history. It is not immediately and absolutely applicable in this world, but it is always relevant. It is the law of all human laws, these human laws being necessitated by the limitations of human nature and by particular historical conditions. It is such a "law of all laws" in a double sense of transcendence. First, it represents the judgment upon them: it shows up the imperfection, nay, even more the sinfulness of man and his law, even of the best man and the best human law. Correspondingly, it implies that *if* men lived completely in God's Kingdom of love and freedom, no specific moral norms and laws (and perhaps no specific religious institutions and ceremonies) would be needed. This very element of

radical criticism in the command of love, however, just when it is most sincerely and concretely accepted, leads to another, "positive" aspect of the "law of laws": it is not only the *crisis* of human law and of human nature and human history in general, it is also their *criterion*, giving both direction and encouragement to the constant improvement of human actions and attitudes. If we have faith and correspondingly the right kind of love, we are encouraged and enabled to transcend the existing state of imperfect relativities by *better* relativities, to create, with the given materials of human vitality and reason, new and better meanings, to reflect the splendor of the eternal somewhat more clearly and brightly in the broken mirror of human existence.

In the Christian gospel, the command of love towards man is inextricably interlaced with the "command" to love God. And we are called upon to be in this world, though not of this world. This means in the light of the supreme command of love that we are responsible to God for this world, within the limits of our best possibilities. It is our business to live towards a fuller realization of the "divine imperative" *within* nature and history, not simply outside and against it. It is not in our power to construct out of hand, here and now, the absolutely good life and the perfect society. A literal, that is mechanical, absolutist attempt at the application of the law of love and the related prescripts of the Sermon on the Mount, without regard to the facts and historical potentialities of human life, and particularly without regard to man's imperfection and sinfulness and their tragic consequences, would do grave injustice to the very spirit of Jesus' teaching, it would only mean a new pharisaism on a higher level, perhaps even a new and supreme idolatry, an attempt to put ourselves into God's place to whom alone belongs the goodness and power fully to transform the world into His Kingdom. Also, such a perfectionist, idealistic attempt to fight evil and sin by a short-cut outside of history must be criticized on two related grounds: it comes short of real love both because of a deeply hidden selfishness implied in it, and because of its consequences.

b. *The meaning of "agape."* At this point it becomes necessary to add some supplementary remarks concerning the character of Christian love in history, and to dispel some misunderstandings that have very much befogged the problem of the applicability and relevance of the command of love. First of all, love (agape)

is not a matter of sentimentality, nor of irrational emotion. I shall come back to the problem of the relations of love to reason later on. At present, let us discuss one specific form of the sentimental interpretation, namely the identification of agape with more or less sentimental *charity*. It is true that, at the proper place, charity and mercy are important expressions of love, but they are not the only ones. Narrowing the concept of love to mere charity removes all other spheres and forms of human action beyond the reach of the spirit of agape and abandons them completely to their own necessities and contradictions. Besides, this narrowing down of love to charity is likely to promote perversions of charity itself. For there exists always the danger of demonic forms of charity. Paul saw this possibility (1. Cor. 13:3), and we all realize and experience it ourselves. Charity may fall very short of the standards of love, whenever it is not the gift of free men to others whose freedom is respected, but rather a busy affair born out of anxiety or the satisfaction of a more or less hidden longing for domination over others and for self-aggrandizement.

Furthermore, love does not exhaust itself in direct intimate personal relations. It does not become impossible and meaningless in the more "impersonal" relationships typical of modern large-scale societies. This point is often denied by highly respected authors like Professor Frank Knight⁷ who are deeply concerned with the ineffectiveness or even with the positive harmfulness of Christianity in modern times and with the need for new relevant ethical principles. These skeptics are likely to concede the meaningfulness and the applicability of Christian principles, even of the rigorous demands of the Sermon on the

⁷See Frank H. Knight, "Religion and Ethics in Modern Civilization," in this JOURNAL, III (1941), 3-22; also "Ethics and Economic Reform, III: Christianity," in *Economica*, London, November 1939, pp. 398-422. Much of this section is a preliminary answer to some parts of Professor Knight's article in this JOURNAL. I hope to be able later to present a more complete comment on Professor Knight's views which will do better justice to many points in his argument. I agree with many of his strictures against actual Christianity, especially with his criticism pointing to the widely practiced substitution of well-meant, haphazard, sentimental social actions for action based on serious intellectual effort. It is also true, as he states, that religion has very frequently exercised a merely conservative social function. But on the basis of my present knowledge and experience I would deny that all this follows *necessarily* from the very principles of Christianity. On the contrary, there seems to me much hope that since Christianity has by now experienced most of the conceivable varieties of Christian thought and action and their tragic consequences—as well as the tragic developments of non-Christian and anti-Christian "systems"—a more

Mount, for the simpler small societies of Jesus' time, but they deny altogether their significance for modern times, apart from the relatively small realm of "intimate" relationships. This again is a dangerous and in principle unwarranted limitation of the nature and scope of agape. If "applicability" with regard to Jesus' teachings means *complete* applicability, then the Sermon on the Mount was inapplicable also in Jesus' time, even within the relatively small circle of his disciples. If only "relative," partial application is meant, then the difference between Jesus' time and our time is a matter of degree only; it constitutes at the most a *relative* disadvantage for our time. Granting for the moment that love can be realized only in small circles of intimate relationships, it should first of all be noted that in Jesus' time as well as in ours intimate relationships might contain very little love or no love at all. Intimate positive relations suggest always a connotation of "*eros*" (in the wider sense of the term). Now *eros* in all its meanings is certainly nothing bad in itself, in spite of certain historically understandable ascetic conceptions of many Christians. But it is subject to perversion and sin, precisely in its most refined forms, and it also requires reconstruction through faith and love—or rather, if faith and love are present, they will express themselves also in and through the medium of *eros*, but they are never identical with *eros*.

Secondly, it should not be overlooked that even in a village or a small order of men, even in a family, in short in groups where everybody is well acquainted with everybody and with everybody's needs and intentions, direct intimate relationships between person and person are by no means all-pervading, perhaps not even dominating. The "impersonal" forces and relationships existing

faithful and more relevant reformulation of the Gospel and its practical meaning will be found. Furthermore, I would deny that faith and church necessarily imply authoritarianism. This is, indeed, true of *idol*-religions into which the Christian religion can always deteriorate, and it is also true of the extreme types of Christian idealism and supranaturalism. However, these are deviations from what modern post-orthodox and post-liberal Christians consider the genuine content of Christian revelation. Also, I would question the validity of the ultimate standards by which Professor Knight tests the "applicability" and desirability of one type of ethics as against another. Neither the actual propensities of present-day man nor any of the many contradictory interpretations of the "needs of human nature" seem to me valid criteria, though all of them have to be taken into account in any more concrete choice between alternative possibilities. Finally, I should think it impossible to discuss Christian ethics quite apart from "eschatological" and "religious" aspects, meaning faith. Just there lies the heart of the ethical-practical problem!

in "simple," small-scale social groups are, of course, different from those prevailing in our large-scale societies. The former comprise tradition rather than formal law, external domination rather than large-scale democracy, compulsions of natural conditions and events rather than of industrial-and market organization. But the older, and even in our days still present, factors are probably no less important than the more modern ones as the context or background in which and against which more intimate relations have to be spontaneously realized. One might even say that the very narrowness and tightness of conditions in simple societies reduce considerably the possibilities of freedom and, *pari passu*, of love. Of course, there remains still a most significant difference in the forms and relative importance of impersonal relations, and it should be admitted that the difficulties for both the realization of intimate relations and also of love have increased considerably. However, this difference is still only one of degree, and it justifies neither an identification of the realm of intimate personal relations as the only locus for the realization of love, nor an exaggerated skepticism as to the applicability, if only incomplete and fragmentary and partly indirect, of the command of love.

To some degree, the historical changes towards modern conditions were not only born out of genuine love in the wider and deeper sense we are trying to redefine, but also actually resulted in more and wider possibilities for love and for both internal and external freedom. However, these forces and their results were, as always in history, entangled with demonic forces and their demonic results. As far as these latter are concerned, they resulted from the very lack of love for God and man, mostly inside the so-called Christian community. If there is any possibility of overcoming them, then it is only by a deeper and more comprehensive spirit of agape realizing itself in very concrete forms. Hence, it is a rather peculiar kind of criticism to use instances and results of the *lack* of faith and love as an argument against the relevance and partial applicability of agape. Here again one might say that the tendency on the part of large historical groups both within and outside the Christian tradition to narrow unduly the potential scope of agape has contributed and is contributing today most decisively to our predicaments and to our despair, because it has helped to discourage creative thought and action on both levels of more personal and of more impersonal relations.⁸ Still assuming

⁸The Command: "Love thy neighbor as thyself" needs perhaps some interpretation. First, as to the words "as thyself," it should be clear that

that intimate personal relations are, if not the only, then at least the most important realm within which Christian ethics could be practiced, we have to ask: Are all those conditions that make intimate personal relations both so difficult and so relatively insignificant in modern society, quite inevitable? If they are not, it would have to be asked whether Christians should not concern themselves with this surrounding *context* of personal life in such a way as to make more room for intimate personal relations and for *agape*.

It is of course impossible to discuss here all relevant factors; only a few points may be indicated. First, the growth of impersonal organizations does not yet imply that they necessarily endanger intimate personal relations. They do so only if they develop out of instrumentalities into ends in themselves, out of common human enterprises in which all persons more or less participate, into means of domination by remote outside groups, or into autonomous centers of mechanical domination that control all men, rich and poor, high and low, as their slaves. However, if all this happens and it has actually happened to a high degree—then it does so only because of the demonic implications of human individual and collective pride and, correspondingly, because of the emptiness and weakness of the “persons” subjected to those impersonal forces. This emptiness, however, which is cumulatively increased by man-made conditions, is ultimately a spiritual emptiness, a mutilation of the full person. Again, the very complexity of modern life and its rapidity of change are only partly an inevitable by-product of the essential bases of modern large-scale society. The complexity and the resulting confusion and threat of disorder and conflict is so great because of the multitude of earthly pseudo-gods which necessarily spring up wherever faith in God is lacking. Those idols, or rather their believers, inevitably fight and refute each other into the very depths of futility. Thus finally groups and individuals become unable to find a meaningful path through all the relativities and conflicts of their lives, unable also to contribute to their overcoming and to a relatively better reintegration of personal and

no self-love is preached. Rather, the sentence might be freely interpreted as meaning: Realize your self not by concentrating on your self, but by believing in God, that is by turning away from yourself toward the other, the neighbor. The term “neighbor” again is not to be taken in a literal sense. Rather it means: whoever is to you, in the concrete conditions and possibilities of your life, the “other” to whose word you have to respond. The neighbor may, therefore, take on very different forms; in limiting cases it might even mean the dead and the unborn; but it is always an “existential” relationship that is meant.

group life. The same holds true with respect to the tempo of modern life and its rate of change which make both our existence as full persons and the creation and maintenance of more intimate personal relations so difficult. This again becomes really serious only because the speed is partly an outcome of a demonic tendency toward self-expansion of both groups and individuals, a tendency which ultimately also becomes self-destructive and futile. The persons subjected to this process are possessed of a false, unregenerated kind of romanticism and of a longing for change for the sake of change—a longing that is deeply mixed with anxiety and even fear of change, and represents flight rather than real conquest of new possibilities of life. Finally, as has again and again been pointed out, a false, pseudo-religious notion of individualism, composed of genuine Christian impulses and a kind of "romantic rationalism," has, together with other factors, contributed to the growth of severe external and internal insecurity and the loss of much inner freedom—the core of a full person—long before external individual freedoms were seriously threatened. In all these aspects, it has repeatedly been suggested how Christian faith, primarily by raising the *center* of our lives above our human vitality and above our reason, secondarily by inspiring corresponding institutional reforms, might render the social and cultural matrix in which we live, both less endangered and less dangerous.⁹ In such an improved situation, intimate relations would be more possible and more significant. According to our temporarily accepted narrow hypothesis, which confines love to the sphere of intimate personal relations, the growth in significance of the latter would *also* enable and call forth the realization of more love.

⁹Apart from rather exceptional deviations, most forms of Christian tradition have never taken "the individual" for granted (as Professor Knight thinks) and have never confined themselves to discussing the right relations between *given* individuals. In the first place, Christian anthropology has always attempted to see the individual self in the context of all natural and social conditioning factors, rejecting both atomistic-individualistic and universalistic types of idealism. Secondly, the Gospel emphasizes most strongly the interrelationship between the basic personal structure of the self and its actions, the latter including man's spontaneous relations to other men and his reactions to more or less organized group action. The command of love, as far as it is heeded and realized, affects and transforms the whole man in all his dimensions. What is accepted as "given" is, at each moment, the sinfulness of man as the general limitation, the existing total social-personal situation with its concrete possibilities of improvement or deterioration as a starting point, and the command and promise of love as "criterion." Everything else is treated as "variable" and thus to be varied in the right direction.

However, this analysis has yet to be corrected in two respects. First, the sharp distinction between person-to-person relations on the one side and impersonal relations and compulsions on the other has to be given up or at least be considerably modified. The person lives and realizes itself chiefly in and through objective, more or less impersonal forms and forces. This holds true with respect to the compulsions of its bodily structure; it holds true also with respect to its social environment. Just as any treatment of the individual and society as simple opposites is misleading and almost never accepted by Christian tradition, so also is any treatment of impersonal and personal spheres of life as mere unrelated opposites. I do not mean here to imply that the special rigidities and compulsions of organized large-scale society could be considerably softened up by the people living and working within those structures. Rather, these compulsions might as such cease to become destructive of persons. It might be possible to develop more significant opportunities for viewing the situations and processes of life as a whole, for actively participating in collective enterprises. Thus the impersonal structures might to some degree become "personalized."¹⁰

This consideration leads immediately to the second point already hinted at before: agape is not only possible in more or less intimate personal relations. It is a principle and force much more comprehensive than that. The very creation and improvement of those objective impersonal structures which we have up to now considered merely as the surrounding conditions or inevitable scaffolding of the actions of love, and the participation in them as such represent the genuine influence of agape in history, though, perhaps, in a somewhat more indirect and less visible manner. Indeed, these partly supra-personal and partly impersonal structures of socio-cultural activities have a very strong tendency to be perverted into demonic forces by man's pride and anxiety. And from the point of view of perfect love, all these activities show shortcomings and antinomies within and between themselves. However, this does

¹⁰The most important link between "person" and society at large is, of course, the family. The close mutual inter-relationships between particular types of family structure and particular types of society are well known. Indeed, the family combines in an inseparable manner "public" (impersonal) and "private" (intimate) aspects and functions. Agape could also, in a comprehensive creative effort which transcends all nice distinctions between individual and social ethics, help to make family life more significant, partly by the encouragement of new forms of family relations.

not mean that faith and love, however imperfectly, cannot and do not enter into the creation, service and improvement of those structures without which life in history is unthinkable. The transcending spirit of love can enter into and transform the sphere of law, of political activities, of economic activities, of play activities, of arts and sciences and of religious ceremonies. Agape gives at once the power and the courage to do this. It also provides the criterion that distinguishes ultimately between "better" and "worse" in these spheres and in their interrelations. Since man cannot be conceived of apart from his culture and his social relations, love of man cannot but include loving participation in these forms and activities. Loving participation means an at once patient and impatient, sin-conscious and hopeful attitude which takes man and his world seriously, but not too seriously. In the condition of imperfection and sinfulness, tensions and conflicts between love of man "as man" and love of man as cultural producer and consumer are, of course, frequent. They arise essentially from the fact that the social-cultural structures in which history takes place possess a certain "semi-autonomy," that is, certain rather harsh *specific* norms and compulsions which everybody who lives and works in these spheres has to take into account. How exactly we differentiate these various spheres, which are, in spite of their semi-autonomy, all interrelated, is here rather unimportant. But in some spheres of life, certain necessities and corresponding "values" or configurations of values stand out, in others other necessities and values. Without aiming at an entirely precise formulation, one might say that in the sphere of art requirements of a peculiar kind have to be partly simply obeyed, partly to be creatively explored, all of which might be comprehended under the notion of "beauty." And so in the scientific pursuits there are the exacting requirements of truth and truthfulness, in the field of the legal order the requirements of both order and justice, in the field of power politics the requirements of the preservation of organized society and of a synthesis between freedom and authority, in the somewhat subordinated sphere of economic activities the requirements of rational efficiency, and so on. If faith and love are lacking, these semi-autonomies of the different spheres of life tend to break apart completely and to set themselves up as idols or demons which men worship and obey. Once this process is started, a cumulative division and multiplication of absolutized

idols and corresponding groups follows. Faith and love are then, at best, pushed into a special and separate compartment. Christianity to a large degree becomes a "Sunday religion." And what people really believe in is "success," or "progress," or revolution, or esthetic refinement, or national aggrandizement, or (frequently hidden under the cloak of nationalism) sheer power for the sake of power. This last supreme idolatry of "political religion" treats everybody and everything (even the remnants of faith) as a mere means. Because of its demonic consistency it wins out over all those other idolatries, thus filling the void left by the loss of faith and love. On the other hand, if faith is accepted and practiced, however imperfectly, the spirit of agape tends to enter into all the semi-autonomous spheres of culture, to bring them more closely together with common meanings, to purify, to improve and to enrich them—within the limits of the given historical possibilities. This transformation of the forms of civilized life by the spirit of love is, of course, always only partial and imperfect. Correspondingly, with all the criticism that the standard of love implies, agape in history cannot mean a *wholesale* rejection of and attack on particular spheres of life and all their basic institutions, but only a partial attack. It might to be sure involve destructive action against a particularly bad form of state, if no other way of more directly creative realistic improvement were possible. In this case, the inevitable consequences of such an entanglement in sin would, of course, have to be taken into account. But in any case, as long as the realm of perfection is not reached, what is required is the application of agape, as far as it is given in faith, not *against* basic forms of human life, but in and *through* them, towards a new realization beyond the existing conditions. In this connection, it is important to note that in the attitude of "living lovingly *in*, though not *of* the world," no ultimate contrast is possible between an "ethics of conscience" which is only concerned with the quality of the actions and especially their underlying motives, irrespective of consequences, on the one side, and an "ethics of responsibility" for the consequences of one's actions on the other side. This contrast was especially emphasized by the great German social scientist, politician and philosopher Max Weber. However, his interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount in a one-sided Tolstoian sense which naturally brings love into the sharpest possible contrast not only to politics but also to all other forms of worldly activities,

seems to me clearly a tragic misinterpretation. Christian ethics is also an ethics of responsibility. The only question is: responsibility to whom and in which directions? It is at *this* point that Christian faith, metanoia and agape give their specific answer, dissolving all human absolutes, but also providing aim and power to the patient reconstruction of our lives. Agape in history means, therefore, such a participation in the life of mankind as will to the most searching conscience, which has been sharpened by the judgment and promise of the Gospel, appear to be the relatively best long-run "net" possibility of making our personal and group life a meaningful response to the ever-present goodness and power of God. Such an attitude within our everyday life does, of course, not escape from the tragic contradictions of human nature, from entanglements with sin and historical guilt. On the contrary, the most concrete perception of demonic possibilities and realities, especially in ourselves and in our group, is one of the most important facets of agape. On the other hand, agape in history implies some courage not simply to surrender nor to hide the real situation from ourselves, but to live up to it, that is, to live through and beyond it. If in this sense, emphasis is put on the word "*fortiter*," then Luther's often criticized admonition "*fortiter pecca*" states a profound truth of the Christian faith. Such a view, of course, does not constitute a justification of "bad means" for "good ends." It requires the choice of always better means for always better concrete ends than were before realistically envisageable. (In fact, the whole distinction between means and ends which underlies that objection might, perhaps, be questioned as a misleading formulation of the real ethical situation.)

These last considerations bring us back to a problem from which we started: the relation of agape to reason and emotion. It must be obvious from the foregoing that rationality and love of truth are a most important implement and consequence of faith and love. There is, then, no point in the usual interpretation of both faith and love as merely emotional and as irrational or even anti-rational. A conflict between faith and agape on the one side and reason on the other side is possible only if reason is expanded into rationalism, into a belief in Reason as a supreme deity. Against this rationalism, Christian tradition points to the limitations, the finiteness and sinfulness of human reason and also to the conclusions of more self-critical science itself which admits

its incompetence in the establishment and justification of ultimate values and meaningful symbols. On the other side, once faith and love of God and man enter our lives, they also tend to redeem, to reconstruct and to redirect our reason as well as our emotions and to encourage men to creative exploration beyond the existing borderlines of thought and knowledge and of emotional experiences. There may be, then, love in thought; indeed, the critical-creative pursuit of truth, with all its apparent coolness and impersonality, if freed from its own basic irrationality of "rationalism," is certainly one of the most important and indispensable expressions of truly personal faith and love. This holds particularly true in times of increased complexity of human life and in times in which Christianity itself is in a deep crisis. Of course, faith and love always transcend reason and the concrete pursuit of truth, they do not exhaust themselves in reason. Moreover, for the very effectiveness of reason in the spirit of agape, the latter must enter and transform all the *other* faculties of man and the other spheres of human culture, too.

Our conclusion is, then, that love (and the same holds correspondingly true for its corollary, faith) in the Christian sense of agape cannot be allocated to one particular province, to one particular faculty or sphere of man and his world, though it may at a given time be more effective in one direction than in others. Rather, agape is the dynamic principle, the good power, the new life, which breaks into our life transforming it in all its concrete forms and aspects. In so far as man exerts his potential spiritual freedom in the direction of sinfulness, he barricades himself against the entering and the redeeming power of agape. Love and, correspondingly, freedom are therefore again and again hampered and destroyed. But, being the radiation of the Kingdom of God, of God's love, into nature and history, agape is the only power that helps us to overcome our self-chosen sin and which gives to human history, our past, our present and our future, concrete existential meaning.¹¹ Since agape

¹¹I trust that this formulation will not be misunderstood as asserting a kind of miraculous "supranatural" power in man. The whole prophetic-protestant concept of transcendence, sin and divine grace which underlies our interpretation, has little to do with any sharp contrast between nature and a supra- and extranatural realm. Agape is "supranatural" only in the sense that it is aware of, and in principle overcomes, the sinfulness so deeply entrenched in actual human nature and that it reorientates the spiritual, rational and vital faculties of man toward a center that is

refers to the "here and now" of finite, imperfect and sinful men, it cannot be expected to create at once a world of perfection, the Kingdom of God on earth. However, from ever-changing starting points, in ever-changing forms, obedient to the specific kairos of the time, it always points and works *towards* the Kingdom, without utopian illusions, but also without despair. The attempt to create a realm of more or less perfect love relations between men outside history, is not agape, but may be considered its very opposite.¹² Finally, since "agape in history" is all-pervasive and all-transcending, it must appear in many different and ever-changing forms. Thus, it is elusive and hidden to most eyes, especially perhaps when it is most genuine. It cannot in truth be given a local habitation—nor a name. To "give it a name" *ad majorem gloriam hominis*, to talk much about love—either about love in general or about our own love, or about this or that act of love—may be the surest way of squandering the gift; it may be a mere substitute for responsible thought and action, a symptom of pride and sin.

[*To be concluded*]

beyond man. However, agape is not a new power additional to the existing potentialities of men. It is rather a power of powers, a "power" behind and within the specific powers of man, integrating and redirecting in a new, more creative matrix of life.

¹²This point may be restated in a somewhat different fashion. Though a reference to Aristotle is not quite in line with the main current of Protestant thought, we may use his distinction between material, formal, efficient and final causes in order to elucidate different aspects of the "law of love." The final cause, in Christian thought, is God and His Kingdom. Nature, including the psychological properties of human beings, may be considered as material causes. Specific forms of human relationships, in a factual or in a normative sense, may be interpreted as formal causes. Efficient causes are, then, the human will and purposive action forming the material of life in the service of the ultimate final cause. Of all material causes, Christianity gives certainly a particular value to love impulses in the sense of feelings of sympathy. Again, among all possible formal causes, love-relationships in the sense of intimate, completely non-violent person-to-person relationships, possess a quite specific value for the Christian way of life; they are, perhaps, the main characteristic of what in Christian hope means the Kingdom of God on earth. However, as long as this Kingdom is not fully established by God and man, His paradoxical co-operator, as long as men live in the relativities of nature and history, in the all-embracing nexus of sin and guilt, the main emphasis, for the Christian, must lie on faith and agape as *efficient* cause. Agape in this sense must certainly rely also on "love" as material and formal cause, but it cannot and must not rely *only* on them if it takes its trust seriously. In particular, any one-sided emphasis on love in the formal sense may weaken and even frustrate love as an *efficient* cause of transforming the world and ourselves.

Symbol and Significance in Worship¹

Henry Wilder Foote

I bring to your attention today a topic which is far removed from the tumult and the shouting of an embattled world locked in a titanic struggle with demonic powers. But on such an occasion as this we may well turn our attention from the burden and bewilderment of the vast tragedy that is being enacted before our eyes to a theme which is of perennial concern to religious minds, whether in pew or pulpit, and particularly to those who are going forth to lead the worship of a congregation. That theme, put in other terms than those which I have used in my title, is the problem of sincerity in the use of symbols, and especially of words long associated with Christian worship.

There is, of course, no problem here for the priest of the Eastern or of the Roman Catholic Church who with unquestioning docility accepts and rejoices in the ecclesiastical symbolism handed down from past generations, and who finds his only task is to interpret it aright to believers. But ministers in the more or less orthodox branches of Protestantism, outside the churches of the Lutheran and Anglican folds, find themselves the inheritors of a diluted and often muddled symbolism which varies greatly from church to church in use and interpretation. They are frequently ill-instructed as to its significance and are therefore erratic in its use and perplexed as to its true meaning. And the religious liberal, whether he considers himself also an inheritor of the Christian tradition, or seeks to be an apostle of "the good life" without any limiting label, is, more than all others, faced with the question of what symbols he can use to convey most effectively to his fellow-worshippers the ideas and emotions which constitute his religious message.

That the problem commands renewed interest today, and that it is not one which admits of a hasty and ill-considered answer, has been made clear by a number of recent books and articles. We cannot dismiss it merely by saying that we will discard all symbols as hindrances to the search for truth, as relics of a superstitious

¹Commencement Address, The Meadville Theological School; delivered in The First Unitarian Church, Chicago, Illinois, June 10, 1941.

past whose ideas we have repudiated. We may, indeed we must discard a long array of ancient symbols which have lost their value, as the living tree sheds its sere and withered leaves, but, if new leaves do not take their place, the tree perishes. For we cannot avoid the use of symbols every day of our lives. Originally the word meant a mark or token signifying something other and greater than itself. The coin bearing the image and superscription of Caesar was more than so much weight of silver used as a convenient medium for the exchange of goods; it was a mark and token of Caesar's sovereignty, even as the Stars and Stripes are for us not merely so many yards of colored bunting but the symbol of our national life.

Not only objects but actions may be symbolic, as the Hebrew prophets demonstrated when Zedekiah wore horns, and Isaiah walked barefoot in Jerusalem for three years, and Jeremiah shattered the earthen vessel. And the Greek Diogenes resorted to a similar expedient when he went about with a lighted lantern in broad daylight searching for an honest man. Men today habitually employ symbolic actions when they shake hands, or salute the flag, or cry "Heil Hitler," or rise to stand uncovered as a mark of respect, or place a wedding ring upon the finger of a bride.

And words are symbols. Written words are symbols of spoken ones, and spoken ones are symbols or tokens of immaterial ideas and concepts, whether we speak of the majesty and eternity of God or of scientific theories like the law of gravitation and the doctrine of evolution.

We must, of necessity, continually resort to such symbolic objects, actions and words, the significance of which is deeply rooted in a long-established common understanding of their general meaning and in the emotional response to which the symbol habitually gives rise. For the symbol has this dual quality of both conveying an idea and of awakening an emotional response. Let me illustrate by the familiar example of the hand-shake. It originated as a gesture of peace and friendship when two armed men approaching each other laid down or transferred to their left hands the weapons they were carrying and each held out an empty right hand to clasp the other's as a token and assurance that neither could inflict injury on the other. That origin of the gesture has long since faded from common knowledge, but the gesture itself has acquired an en-

hanced significance. When my friend cordially presses my hand my heart warms with pleasure, or, if a man who dislikes me refuses his hand, I not only sense his dislike but feel within a surge of resentment. In either case the action not only conveys the idea of friendliness or dislike, but stimulates a corresponding emotive response.

Now religion, whatever form it takes, is concerned not only with immaterial ideas but with the emotional response thereto. Philosophy and science appropriately use cool, formal, precise phraseology in the endeavor to describe their findings as exactly as possible, for they are concerned only with the results of intellectual processes and scrupulously avoid entanglement with any emotive appeal. But religion, while it must always build upon the firm foundations of intellectual inquiry, is concerned primarily with the human response to the standards of conduct which it seeks to establish, and to the spiritual realities which it affirms. Therefore it is inevitable that religion should make habitual use of objects, actions and words which are the visible or audible symbols of an inner and spiritual reality and which awaken and guide the emotional response to that reality. Its voice, to be heard and answered, must be like deep calling unto deep, resonant with overtones which awaken long, long thoughts, and give utterance to the heart's unspoken longings, and strengthen the will to strive unceasingly, even in the face of pain and loss, for the yet unattained good. It must invest the outward form with an inner meaning, and it is effective precisely in the measure in which it does so in a manner sufficiently direct, natural and simple to appeal to the understanding and imagination of the people who turn to it for stimulus and guidance. How to do that is, in essence, the problem of the interpreter of religion.

The fundamental error of those who have revolted against the symbolism inherited from the religion of the past is to imagine that they can cut themselves off from it altogether and build a house of faith without foundations in the habits and experiences of the race. In our day they have sought to eliminate forms and words reminiscent of the past, substituting for them a freshly minted, clear-cut pseudo-scientific phraseology in the atmosphere of a public lecture hall, only to discover that the ethical program and the intellectual interpretation of life which they present, even when excellent in themselves, have slight emotive power over the hearts

of men. The engine appears to be technically perfect, but there is not enough fire beneath the boiler to generate the steam which will cause it to move.

They have overlooked the essential fact that every great religion is of necessity deeply rooted in the past. It flourishes best in a soil enriched by the thought and life of many generations, even as plant life grows best in the humus deposited by the living flora of past ages. As a plant set in bare sand starves for lack of nourishment, so religion produces only a weak and stunted growth when it is transplanted into a sterile intellectualism and is watered by a thin ethical idealism. It may suffice for a few hardy and self-reliant souls who find their religion in their solitariness more easily than in common worship with their fellow-men, but it lacks the elements needed to nourish the emotional life of the mass of men, whose lives are governed far more by their emotions than by their minds, and who are steadied and up-borne by a sense of belonging to a "Beloved Community of Memory and Hope," the communion of saints living and dead, the church militant and triumphant, of which long-familiar words and objects are the constant reminder. For most men the traditional symbols of religion, inherited from their fathers and hallowed by the associations of childhood, are far more powerful in stimulating right conduct than is any intellectual understanding of the universe. The problem of the religious liberal, therefore, is how to retain in use those symbols which still have valid significance, and how to reinterpret them to this generation in such a way as will preserve their emotive power without sacrifice of intellectual sincerity.

In facing that problem we must not forget that any particular symbol arises out of the need of a given situation, and tends to lose its significance as circumstances change. As Whittier sang,

*The letter fails, the systems fall,
And every symbol wanes;
The Spirit, over-brooding all,
Eternal Love, remains.*

This is true of the great mass of the Christian symbolism of the past. The Christians of the Roman catacombs, for example, developed an esoteric symbolism the meaning of which was unperceived by hostile pagan eyes,—the fish as a symbol of Christ; the palm branch for the martyr's burial niche; the anchor of hope;

the swastika, which was a pagan emblem yet suggested the cross; the figure of the Good Shepherd, which to pagan eyes appeared to be Hermes carrying a lamb.

All symbolism has something of this esoteric character; no longer as camouflage to veil its real meaning from unsympathetic eyes but because any symbol has validity only for those initiated into its significance. Thus the European or American entering for the first time a Buddhist or a Hindu temple is at a loss to understand the significance of the lotus flower; of the conventional posing of the hands in a statue of the Buddha; of the many arms and seemingly grotesque posture of a Hindu deity. He is blind to all the intricate symbolism about him until it is explained. Indeed, one of the problems of the Christian missionary in the Orient is to build churches which shall not be wholly alien to their setting in form and symbolism, yet which shall avoid the use of oriental motifs which to the occidental eye appear to be purely decorative but which to the Hindu or Buddhist or Chinese convert are freighted with reminiscences of the religion which he has abjured in favor of Christianity.

Every form of worship has something of this esoteric quality which refuses to reveal its full significance to the visitor unacquainted with its purpose. Even the silent meeting of the Quakers, one of the simplest forms ever practiced by men, requires some knowledge of the doctrine it expresses, if it is to be fully appreciated. And, at the other extreme, mass in a Roman Catholic church, or the Divine Liturgy in one of the Eastern rite, is so loaded with an intricate symbolism that the uninstructed Protestant is bewildered by what is going on before his eyes. Seeing he sees not, hearing he hears not what to the initiated worshipper beside him is a divine drama every detail of which speaks of heavenly things.

Even our free churches, with their inherited austerity of congregational worship, cannot wholly avoid something of this esoteric quality, because it is inevitable that any form should mean more to those long familiar with its movement and content than it does to one who comes to it for the first time from an alien atmosphere. Especially is that true when form and content alike have moulded the thought and character of childhood and youth. Our constant endeavor, of course, should be to make our services of worship so simple, direct and unequivocal that the casual visitor may quickly

grasp their meaning and significance. But that should never mean a dilution of their quality and content into a thin trickle of obvious and insignificant commonplaces from which all the spiritual nourishment has been eliminated. Such a meagre diet may for a little while appeal to a stomach which has revolted against an undigested load of stale theology or overripe sentimentality, but it is inadequate to sustain a robust spiritual life eager to fight the good fight. The effective service of worship which people come to love must be affirmative; not a series of pale negations. If it sets forth with intellectual clarity what we *do* believe, the things which we do not believe are better left unsaid. And the things which we do believe will be said with greater power if, so far as is consistent with sincerity, we use the familiar symbolic forms and words which are rooted in the great tradition of religious life inherited from the past. For worship must have the imaginative appeal and emotive force produced by the association of our present mood with past experiences; by the haunting beauty of long-remembered words and music; by the light thrown ahead upon our way by the wisdom of the ages, if it is to stir our hearts as well as illuminate our minds.

There are, however, three dangers inherent in the symbolism which gathers about ancient forms of worship as moss gathers on a stone long left untouched. The first danger is that of degeneration into superstitious practices, so that magical properties are attributed to sacred objects, words, or actions; or the symbol becomes a fetish or an idol which is worshipped in place of the spiritual reality which it is intended to signify. When the sign of the cross is made by a frightened simpleton in the belief that it will repulse the devil, or when sacramental validity is supposed to inhere in the priestly use of a fixed formula of word and action, the symbol has become a means by which a supernatural transaction is supposed to take place. The believer, it is true, sees a profound difference between a sacramental act wrought by the power of God for the salvation of souls, and the use of magic with the aid of the devil for evil ends. Nevertheless both sacrament and magic are alike rooted in the belief inherited from primitive men that this world is a place in which supernatural transactions, whether for good or evil, can be brought to pass by men who have been initiated into a prescribed procedure. Needless to say, that belief is wholly alien to our modern conception of the universe.

And it is an easy stage from that belief into the idolatry against which Judaism formulated its commandment, "Thou shalt not make unto thyself any graven image." Some branches of Christianity, with their sacred images or ikons to which supernatural qualities have been attributed, have led their more ignorant adherents perilously close to idolatry.

It was this degeneration into superstition and idolatry against which reformers within the church have again and again made their protest as they saw one or another symbol turned to uses which obscured rather than revealed the divine reality. And often, as with the Puritans, they have abandoned symbols which for them were associated with superstitious practices, but which we may again find useful because with us such associations no longer prevail. Thus the cross, even in its simplest form, or lighted candles on the altar, were associated in their minds with the corruptions of the medieval religion from which they had but recently emerged. But for us a cross, whatever the significance attached to it by other groups, is a symbol of self-devotion to ideal ends, even at the cost of life itself, as well as of the common origin of all the separated branches of the Christian church. And lighted candles no longer suggest the fires of the Inquisition, but the courageous faith that worshipped in the darkness of the catacombs; or the way in which religion passes from soul to soul as each is kindled by the divine fire; or that insight into human nature which saw that "the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord;" or the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

The second danger in symbolism is that of over-elaboration. It becomes too intricate, artificial and cumbersome to be easily grasped and understood save by the students of the subject; a burden to be borne rather than a light shining through material things as a flame illuminates an alabaster vase from within. This tendency is observable in every church which emphasizes ritual at the expense of the prophetic word; in which meticulous adherence to form darkly overshadows fresh shoots of aspiration struggling toward the light; in which religion is thought of as conformity to accepted standards rather than as a continuing search for the unattained values of life. Our free churches are not wholly free from this danger, which not infrequently takes the form of compiling orders of worship which are only a miscellany of episodes, actions and choir responses put together without due consideration of their

psychological sequence and significance, sometimes, apparently, on the theory that a long service, which gives people plenty to do and several anthems to listen to, will atone for an abbreviated and mediocre sermon which says little. The cure is to include in the service nothing which is meaningless or unnecessary, confusing or unworthy; to make good use of the abundant devotional resources of fine quality that are available; and to make sure that whatever is said or done shall be carried out in the most direct, natural and simple way, moving forward with unbroken movement from the call to worship to the benediction of peace.

And it calls for a careful selection of symbols which are genuine in the sense that they are not, on the one hand, ignorantly misused, and do not, on the other hand, suggest ideas alien to those held by the people to whom they are presented. I have seen Unitarian churches upon the walls of which a professional decorator has stencilled a triangle and circle,—symbol of the Trinity; or with a window showing a Lamb and Flag,—emblem of the Atonement. A certain theological school a good deal less than a thousand miles from here has a Lamb and Flag as a weather-vane. Now the figure of a cock as a weather-vane appropriately symbolizes the watchman expectant of God's dawning day, or alert preparedness to face whatever comes, or it serves as a reminder of Peter's denial of his Lord. But an Agnus Dei belongs upon an altar and not upon a steeple. Even with the example of this noble church before our eyes, and with all deference to the different opinion of my dear friend, its honored minister, I have always felt that the modern practice of building into our churches a fixed altar instead of using a moveable communion table is to give a false connotation to our interpretation of the communion service, for an altar is a place where an atoning sacrifice is offered, whereas a table is the common meeting-place for the household of faith.

The third danger in symbolism is that symbols tend to become preservatives of outgrown ideas and concepts, intellectually acceptable when they arose, but perpetuated by the symbol long after they have ceased to express the actual thought and aspiration of living men. In the case of symbolic objects or decorative motifs the original significance may fade out of common remembrance until the symbol becomes little more than a harmless and meaningless traditional ornament. In the case of words, however, the traditional symbolic phrases may long continue to hold men's minds

in a groove of thought and emotional reaction which is increasingly at variance with the rest of their experience in our modern world. To some people this canalization of religion into a separate compartment, set apart from all questioning and doubt, provides an acceptable escape from the problems and pressures of secular life into a mystical dream-world of the spirit. But for others it creates a sharp and disturbing sense of the unreality of religion because of the discrepancy between its language and that of modern thought.

This perpetuation of outworn ideas through the instrumentality of symbolic language is frequently illustrated in Protestant forms of worship, from the Book of Common Prayer to many of the older hymns still in common use. The incongruity between the archaic formulas and modern thought is partially concealed by beauty of language, and by use so habitual that small attention is given to the original and true meanings of the words; or else the ancient phrases are reinterpreted in a way to make them acceptable to modern minds. But the religious liberal is compelled by his recognition of the essential importance of intellectual integrity, which he shares with the scientist and the philosopher, to abandon the use of symbols and symbolic language clearly intended to signify concepts no longer genuine and vital. But there remain other symbols and words which are still valid for modern use, or which are open to a legitimate reinterpretation which will carry over their emotive power without coming into conflict with our current vernacular of ideas. It is in this field that the liberal must find his materials for worship.

As has already been indicated, it is obvious that by far the greater part of the religious symbolism of the past has for us only an archeological interest, because it is too abstract, or too remote from our experience, or because it points to theological dogmas no longer valid for us. In the Middle Ages, when the roads to scientific research were not yet open to men's minds, the human intellect revolved in endless theological speculations and fancifully embroidered every detail of the religious life with intricate symbolism. Much of it was *ex post facto*. Simple and necessary actions were, with the passage of time, invested with religious significance. That is illustrated in the prayers which the priest says as he dons his priestly vestments before saying mass, and in his washing of hands before he reads the Preface. Every detail of

church architecture had its symbolic interpretation. The three-fold portal of a great cathedral was interpreted to symbolize the Trinity; the double door stood for the dual nature of Christ. The church was the ship which bore souls to salvation across the storm-tossed waters of life, hence we speak of the nave of the church, though we have forgotten the origin of the word.

The similes often used in medieval hymns for Christ, and especially for the Virgin Mary, would sound very strange to modern ears. A single sample, and one of the less extravagant, will suffice. There is a medieval Latin hymn addressed to

Jesu, pie pellicane.

• • • •
Jesus, holy pelican.

To us the comparison of Jesus to a pelican seems grotesque, but in the Middle Ages the pelican was a symbol of the Atonement, because it was mistakenly supposed to feed its young with blood drawn from its own breast. You will find a pelican on the arms of Jesus College, Oxford.

But Protestant hymnody is replete with expressions now as obsolete, or on their way out of current use. For example, a great number of English hymns in the eighteenth century described man as a "worm." The very last hymn by Charles Wesley, dictated to his wife a few days before his death in his eightieth year, began,

*In age and feebleness extreme
Who shall a sinful worm redeem?*

What Canon Dearner called "the vermicular hymn" was a standard article of diet in the evangelical Protestantism of that period. But I doubt if a single hymn "with a worm in it" is to be found in a standard American hymn-book today. The cult of the worm has given way to another and truer conception of human nature.

The word "blood" has similarly ceased to have any useful emotive power for most of us, though Professor Wieman in a recent article¹ did say that though he did not use the word in this part of the world he would not hesitate to do so if he lived in a community where it still had religious significance. Most of us, however, shudder at Cowper's hymn,

*There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;*

¹"On Using Christian Words," *Journal of Religion*, XX (July 1940), pp. 257-269.

And sinners plunged beneath that flood

Lose all their guilty stains,—

as we do at the literalism of the eucharistic hymn,

Draw nigh and take the body of the Lord,

And drink the holy blood for you outpoured.

Both of these, be it remembered, are hymns which have had a strong emotional appeal, but the repellent symbolism has destroyed their usefulness for most modern minds.

Our antipathy to these outworn phrases, however, or our recognition that a great number of other symbols acceptable in the past conveyed ideas and doctrines long since obsolete, should not blind us to the value of those symbolic forms, new or old, which are still pregnant with vital meaning. As Professor Pratt has said,

“The Christian tradition is to a great extent preserved and transmitted by means of religious symbols, whose power is largely due to the halo of the past which shines about them. These symbols are limited in number and cannot be replaced.

... If they be allowed to lose their power for a single generation it will never be possible for them to regain it.”²²

Liberal religion will not only deepen and strengthen its own life but will render an important service to others if it can carry over into modern worship with renewed and vital significance those ancient symbols which do connote the continuity of the Christian life in the church universal.

It can do that only if we remember that at least the greatest and most widely used Christian symbols have not been limited to a single dogmatic interpretation of their significance, but that their emotive power has accompanied very diverse intellectual explanations of their meaning. For example, the commemoration of the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples has taken on widely divergent interpretations under the no less diverse forms of the sacrifice of the Mass in the Roman Church, the simplicity of the Lord’s Supper in Scotch Presbyterianism, the Communion Service in Congregationalism, and in all other numberless ways in which most Christian bodies have observed it. Yet all go back to a common origin; each interpretation has possessed validity for those into whose system of thought it fitted; and each had awakened an answering emotion which has made widely separated wor-

²²*Journal of Religion*, XXI (Jan. 1941), p. 50.

shippers akin in spirit though of differing minds, even as the far-flung islands, separated by the wind-tossed surface of the estranging sea, are bound together by the hidden depths of submerged continental shelves from which they rise. For liberal religion to abandon the Communion Service simply because for others it has a variety of doctrinal significations that we do not accept is to repudiate what we believe to be its true meaning and value as a symbol of the unity of the spirit in the great household of faith; of the family of mankind sharing the common gifts of life; a commemoration of the soul's devotion to ideal ends. It is a symbol which should bind us to the unforgotten past of which we are the offspring, and remind us of the great tradition of religious insight and life which is our heritage. In that tradition the ancient theological formulas and ritualistic practices are but the transitory reflections of light and shade cast upon the stream of devout and noble living which flows across the generations and in which we have a rightful share. For the Christian religion, like every other great faith, is a continuous river of the inner life flowing down the generations, even though its aspect is subject to perpetual change with the changing terrain of intellectual interpretation through which it passes. As one of our own poets has said,

*From heart to heart, from creed to creed
The hidden river runs;
It quickens all the ages down,
It binds the sires to sons,—*

*The stream of faith, whose source is God,
Whose sound, the sound of prayer,
Whose meadows are the holy lives
Upspringing everywhere.*

Such a re-interpretation of symbols or of words originally connoting intellectual concepts long since displaced by later ones, or freighted with very diverse meanings for different people, is not merely legitimate when done without equivocation; it is an essential feature in the development of language which gives changing shades of meaning to words to keep pace with changing thought. We continue to speak of the rising or the setting sun, although we now know that the sun is motionless in relation to the earth. We do not hesitate to resort to poetic imagery to convey ideas or

emotions; to personalize "Mother Earth;" to speak of an "angry" sea or a "serene" sunset; to repeat

Let the floods clap their hands;

Let the hills sing for joy.

The language of religion of necessity abounds in such poetic symbolism because through such means alone can the outreachings of the heart be expressed. To quote Professor Wieman again, "One cannot live religiously unless one uses religious words" because of the psychological fact that thought and feeling are completely dependent upon familiar and wisely understood language not only for their transmission from mind to mind and heart to heart but for our own realization of their existence. Therefore there is seldom anything to be gained, and usually there is much to be lost by trying to substitute modern philosophical or scientific terms for words in immemorial use to convey religious ideas and emotions. Language may be made an instrument of precision for the description of tangible things or of discernible processes, but it must resort to imagery and suggestion when it deals with the longings and aspirations of the soul and the unfathomed mysteries of life and death. To attempt to define these with literal accuracy is to discover that the letter killeth and that we have lost the spirit which giveth life.

To talk of "the principle of concretion" or "the unconditioned transcendent" in order to avoid saying "God" in a service of worship, or to substitute a soliloquy of wishful thinking about ourselves for a prayer which gives utterance to the common hopes, longings and aspirations of an assemblage, is to puzzle and confuse the worshipper. Indeed it results in the more or less complete elimination of anything that can properly be called worship, which springs from the awareness that our lives are engulfed in mystery; that we came not hither of our own will and are dependent upon a Power other and infinitely greater than our own; that our lives attain their finest fulfillment when we know and are obedient to the moral law of the universe which our fathers called "the will of God." As intellectual definitions of what the word "God" means to us we may find "the principle of concretion" or "the unconditioned transcendent," or some other abstract formula, useful in clarifying our thought. But when it comes to communicating to others a sense of the wonder of the universe and a realization of

man's relation thereto we find that the ancient symbolic word "God" serves our purpose as does no other because it is freighted with a hallowed significance which no modern definition can acquire. And to use it binds us to none of the crude, childish or superstitious ideas of Deity held in ages past, or by untrained minds today, for we are free to give it the larger and truer interpretation to which our present thinking has led us.

Similarly, we cannot create at will a substitute for the words "Our Father who art in heaven," because they are resonant with the voices of an uncounted multitude of saints and sinners for nineteen hundred years. Nor do we need to, for when we repeat them we are not discussing the personality of God, nor mapping a celestial cosmogony. We are using a priceless symbol to interpret our relationship to the universe in which we find ourselves at home as children are at home in their earthly father's house; we are expressing our conviction that all material phenomena are subsumed and find their being in a spiritual reality who is

*... within a quickening flame,
A Presence round about.*

Such a re-interpretation of the great symbols of religion is not only intellectually legitimate,—it is essential to the continuity of the religious life through the successive generations and to the maintenance of our fellowship in the church universal. It is far easier thus to habituate new meanings for old and generally accepted symbols than to devise new symbols, which, however meaningful for us, can only after long years slowly acquire a meaning for others.

This process of the unceasing re-interpretation of religious thought can nowhere be better illustrated than in the ever-changing stream of Christian hymnody. It is true that the symbolism embalmed in many hymns still in use is archaic and unreal, and is perpetuated long after its value has ceased because both words and tune are endeared by association. Some years ago the Archbishop of York scandalized the less thoughtful of his fellow-churchmen by remarking that there were "only a half dozen hymns" which he could sing "with any degree of reality at all," and that "most of the hymns in use are lamentably out of touch with what is moving in men's minds today." Nevertheless the newer hymn-books are steadily dropping those hymns which express out-worn

conceptions of God and man, though more rapidly in some denominations than in others. For the modern liberal the hymns which give utterance to the religious thought and aspiration of today are among the most effective instruments for a re-interpretation of ancient symbols which will enable us to say with the apostle Paul, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." And we may well apply to all our worship the injunction prescribed by the first Council of Carthage for the induction of choristers:

*"See that thou believe in thy heart
what thou singest with thy mouth;
and approve in thy works what thou
believest in thy heart."*

For though our worship must be rooted in understanding, it must flower with the emotive power which stirs the heart, and bear fruit in a way of life strengthened and purified and uplifted by our communion with kindred souls in the presence of the Eternal. For so alone shall we worship in spirit and in truth him who seeketh such to worship him.

Book Reviews

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA AND FREEDOM

The purpose of this monograph¹ is to place Clement of Alexandria in the history of Christian ethics by studying his interpretation of the Pauline view of freedom. The problem of the dynamics of human nature was one which interested Paul profoundly, partly because of his naturally introspective temperament and more particularly because of the stimulus and encouragement given to this kind of reflection by his conversion. If the Law was no cure for moral impotence and must be abandoned as the foundation of moral life and replaced by the charismatic working of the Spirit, what were the implications for human nature? What were the main factors in man's moral equipment? By virtue of what circumstances is human nature what it is? Why did God will it to be so?

Paul's answers to these questions form the most original and significant part of his theology. They were, however, little heeded or understood by his immediate successors and it was not until the use of the Gnostic speculative systems in the second century that the deeper ethical problems again came up for analysis. The ablest of the Gnostics, men like Valentinus and Basilides, had had no first hand experience of Judaism and had therefore no feeling for Paul's imperative need to combine Jewish and Christian moral values. For them the moral problem was essentially a constitutional one and complete success, relative success or hopeless failure in this sphere were due to differences in the inherent constitution of several classes of men, pneumatic, psychics, hylics and the like. They did not turn naturally to the Old Testament for an historical explanation of the facts but invented their own philosophical pseudo-mythology as a substitute for the Jewish elements in Christianity.

Clement occupies a middle ground between the Pauline attempt to fuse Judaism and Christianity and the Gnostic inclination to eliminate Judaism altogether. His experience was, however, like that of the Gnostics, wholly Gentile and his main difference from them was that his philosophical sensibilities and competence was greater than theirs and his grasp of the indispensable elements of Catholic Christianity firmer. Where Pauline thought shades off into Gentile speculation, Clement's Platonism enabled him at once to grasp the point and sense the experience lying behind Pauline phraseology. Where the premises of Paul's thought were essentially Jewish, as in Romans and Galatians, Clement had no real perception of the bearing of his arguments. Sin, righteousness and judgment tended to become error, purification and perfection.

Buri² has carefully collected and discussed all the relevant passages from

¹CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS UND DER PAULINISCHE FREIHEITS-BEGRIFF. By Fritz Buri. Zurich: Max Niehans, 1939. 114 pp. RM.3.—

²Dr. Buri of the University of Bern is one of the leading younger theologians of the liberal group in Europe. He is an ardent supporter of the work of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom, and he has often been a delegate and speaker at the international conferences of that association. [Editor's Note.]

Clement bearing on his theme and has made admirably clear the theological issues at stake. It is perhaps a defect implicit in its merit that his book makes the impression of a more rigid systematization than either Paul or Clement achieved or showed a disposition to achieve. There is also little that is really new in his view of either author. For students of Christian ethics it will serve as a useful collection of important material and a lucid exposition of the main ethical problems which Christianity had to face at the end of the second century.

Brown University

ROBERT P. CASEY.

BUT WILL IT OPEN THE DOOR?¹

To an American whose church is rooted in the tradition of the English Puritans, who admires profoundly the contribution of England to liberal Christian thought, who has been stirred to the depth by the new and dynamic spirit of the British under Winston Churchill, this little book comes as the faint echo of a 19th century rationalism which is dead. The title is misleading. Such a slender key is inadequate to the massive lock before us. World problems are hardly mentioned in passing.

Is British Unitarianism completely out of touch with that vital and dynamic literature which is interpreting English thought and spirit to America? The author condemns orthodoxy as sterile, but he has nothing prophetic to say, comparable to Malvern or the Report of the Commission of the British Churches on Social Justice and Economic Reconstruction, with the Archbishop of York as its chairman. In his "Out of the People" J. B. Priestley is also inclined to dismiss the orthodoxy of the churches as irrelevant, but he does so in the name of a new and dynamic spirit, of a commanding vision to nerve the will and to rally the hearts of men with a new sense of brotherhood which is more like the power of Christian faith, disentangling itself from its fetters, than anything else we know. But in these pages we must content ourselves with Aristotle's Principle of Non-Contradiction, a detached view of inevitable progress due to the general theory of evolution, and of cosmic optimism, vaguely related to Judeo-Christian ethics. Each chapter is aptly prefaced with a quotation from *Pilgrim's Progress*, but the text of the author leaves us wondering whether the faith which nerved John Bunyan is alive in him.

Our British Unitarian Churches have been hard hit by the war and we know from other sources how heroically they are meeting this new situation. We have been with them from the first in heart and spirit, and we rejoice that we are now with them in body and substance, as we face together a common foe, but that religious movement which should be the spear-head of Christian liberal faith in the greatest struggle of all history still cries for an adequate interpreter.

The First Parish in Cambridge

LESLIE T. PENNINGTON.

¹I HAVE A KEY, Chapters on World Problems. By Stephens Spink, M.A. London: The Lindsey Press. 64 pages. Price, 1 shilling.

A SCHOLAR WRITES A POPULAR BOOK

Dr. Soares has done the impossible. He has written a scholarly book with a plan that makes crooked things straight and in language of taste and power.¹ Here is a gift from the gods to those who are seeking a single textbook for the whole Bible for use with high school, college, and adult classes, uncomplicated by diverse obscurities over which Biblical scholars love to contend.

Those who have had scholarly training in the New Testament will appreciate the positions taken on the gospels. The author relies on the tradition that Mark stems from the apostle Simon called Peter. He holds to multiple sources for Matthew and Luke including two other characters called Third and Fourth disciples "whose memories were later preserved in written form." He makes the apostle Matthew the author of the hypothetical Q document, which he accepts. The sources of the Fourth Gospel are much simplified, becoming two pregospels unknown to synoptic writers.

Newport, Vermont

HAROLD SCOTT.

YOUTH IN THE CHURCH²

This manual of young people's activities in our Unitarian churches begins with an indictment of the scores of churches in which young people from fifteen to twenty-five years of age are neglected and left to shift for themselves, while their elders ask, "Why doesn't the younger generation go to church any more?" It expresses the experience of the author and the young people who have worked with him that in any normal Unitarian Church "young people can play a prominent part and find in the life of the church an opportunity to do a great many things together they cannot do half so effectively anywhere else."

It opens with a clear and concise statement of the problems that youth faces, and of the biological, intellectual, religious, aesthetic, social and material needs of young people. There continues a statement of the aims of a young people's program in terms of the church, the building of personal character, and the making of adequate social adjustments. This is followed by the main body of the book, which is an extremely practical and detailed discussion of how the aims may be translated into a workable and inspiring program. So admirably are the techniques of organization and leadership illustrated that even the least adept youth leader will find his work lightened and improved by their use.

Mr. Fritchman's book will bring an expression of gratitude to the lips of many a busy minister. Already it has increased the effectiveness of this minister's youth work one hundred per cent.

The People's Liberal Church of Chicago

DONALD HARRINGTON.

¹THE ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE. By Theodore Gerald Soares. Harper & Brothers, 1941. 277 pp. \$2.50.

²YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE LIBERAL CHURCH. By Stephen H. Fritchman. Boston: The Beacon Press. 99 pp. 85 cents.